

VZCZCXRO9366
RR RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHDA RUEHDBU RUEHDF RUEHFL RUEHIK RUEHKW RUEHLA
RUEHLN RUEHLZ RUEHPOD RUEHROV RUEHSR RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHSI #1562/01 1800954
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 290954Z JUN 07
FM AMEMBASSY TBILISI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6850
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TBILISI 001562

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [RS](#) [GG](#)
SUBJECT: SANAKOYEV SPEAKS IN BRUSSELS

Summary

1. On June 26, Dmitry Sanakoyev, head of Georgia's Temporary Administration of South Ossetia, addressed the European Parliament in Brussels. Georgian media gave extensive and positive coverage to the event, hailing it as the first ever address made in Brussels in the Ossetian language. The separatist regime in South Ossetia criticized the speech and reportedly turned off electrical power so that residents of Tskhinvali would be unable to watch it on live television. End Summary.

Georgia and Ossetia will come back to Europe

2. Sanakoyev, appearing at the European Parliament as a member of the Georgian delegation, started his speech by stressing the significance of Europe and its institutions for the Ossetian people, as an example of "leading a dignified life, forgetting the problems of the past and creating an environment where every person is guaranteed a safe, dignified and peaceful existence." Sanakoyev expressed his belief that due to the progress of the past three years, Georgia is "returning to Europe, its natural environment," and, together with Georgia, so will South Ossetia. Sanakoyev stressed that he was speaking as an ordinary Ossetian who himself fought in the conflict and who had personally experienced all the hardships that had beset South Ossetia for the past 17 years. At the same time, he said it was absolutely certain that the conflict, which occurred due to the faults of the Soviet legacy and grave mistakes made by both sides, "should come to an end and become history, as a tragic and shameful blight on the centuries-long friendship of the Georgian and Ossetian peoples."

Political will creates hope

3. Sanakoyev stressed that a just and peaceful resolution of the conflict could not be achieved without restoration of mutual confidence and respect between Georgians and Ossetians which, in turn, could be achieved only through direct dialogue. He underscored that political will for such a resolution had emerged in Georgia and this also creates hope for the final settlement. In addition, such a dialogue requires a conducive environment and friends ready to assist in critical situations; and that is why "the role of the European Union in confidence building and economic rehabilitation is so significant." Unfortunately, he added, the Ossetian people have become hostages of the de facto regime, which under the dictation of the "northern neighbor" is "oriented to preserve the status quo in South Ossetia."

From a zone of conflict to a zone of tourism

4. Looking into the future, Sanakoyev stressed that "Ossetian people have a lot to say to the world," and South Ossetia should transform from a "zone of conflict" into a "zone of tourism." This goal should be preceded by joint social, economic and cultural

projects, but most important is mutual work to specify wide autonomy for South Ossetia, and elaboration of guarantees for political representation and preservation of cultural identity, which has already started." At the same time, Sanakoyev stressed that while working for this common goal, South Ossetia and the central government in Tbilisi had different views on a number of issues, and under such circumstances the participation of an objective and friendly arbiter was essential. "Europe can be such an arbiter," concluded Sanakoyev, calling on European institutions and experts to get actively involved in discussions on the status of South Ossetia.

Tbilisi hails speech; Tskhinvali turns off the light

15. Tbilisi media, commentators, and politicians of all views gave favorable reviews to Sanakoyev's speech, characterizing the fact that he addressed the European Parliament a "serious step forward" and a "historic" event. Reaction in the separatist region was predictably negative, and according to press reports, the de facto government went so far as to turn off electrical power in the Tskhinvali district during the speech, so that the population could

SIPDIS

not watch it on Georgian-sponsored Alania television. The de facto ministry of foreign affairs issued a statement expressing "indignation" over the event, which it characterized as part of "Georgia's broad-scale campaign to legalize the puppet temporary administration."

Comment

16. The Georgians clearly see Sanakoyev's appearance in Brussels as a major step toward greater international recognition of Sanakoyev as a legitimate representative of South Ossetia, something they believe will also bolster his standing among the South Ossetian population. We do not know if it is indeed having this effect, but

TBILISI 00001562 002 OF 002

the reported shutoff of electricity during Sanakoyev's speech suggests that the de facto authorities fear just such an outcome.

TEFFT